

CGC TAHOMA interdicts 192 Haitian migrants

24 Dec 2002 Press Release

On December 21, 2002, Coast Guard Cutter TAHOMA (WMEC 908) interdicted 192 Haitian migrants 37 miles west of Crooked Island, Bahamas. Early Saturday morning, TAHOMA spotted the migrants, believed to be attempting to enter the United States illegally, on a dangerously overcrowded 40-foot sailing vessel in Crooked Island Pass. The vessel was very unstable and slowly taking on water.

During rescue operations, the vessel came dangerously close to capsizing several times. The quick response of TAHOMA crewmembers ensured a safe transfer for all migrants. Using both of the cutter's small boats, crewmembers of the TAHOMA safely transferred all 192 migrants from their un-

seaworthy vessel to TAHOMA. The vessel was later destroyed, as it was a hazard to navigation.

All migrants interdicted at sea remain in Coast Guard custody where they are given food, water, and medical care if necessary. In accordance with existing policies, migrants will normally be repatriated back to their country of origin. TAHOMA will repatriate all 192 men, women, and children to Port-au-Prince, Haiti within days. TAHOMA will continue patrolling the Caribbean and Windward Passage until her return to homeport.

The Coast Guard Cutter TAHOMA is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter from New Bedford, Massachusetts.

RELEASED: GARY M. SMIALEK, CDR – COMMANDING OFFICER